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VERSES

On the DEATH of

Mr. PRIOR.

V E R S E S

On the DEATH of

M. P R I O R.

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On the DEATH of

Mr. PRIOR,

Humbly Inſcrib'd to the Right Honble the

Lady *HENRIETTA CAVENDISH,*

HOLLES, HARLEY.

By Mr. *BECKINGHAM.*

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WHilſt * *WIMPLE*'s Dome its envy'd Gueſt reſigns,
And in a Subject's Loſs a Nation pines;
Illuſtrious MADAM, with Indulgence view
What Sorrow writes, and Zeal directs to you:
Sorrow, the only Tribute can be paid
By all the Sons of Art to *PRIOR*'s Shade.
To him all Monuments but that are Vain,
And That, if erring into Praiſe, prophane.

* My Lord *Harley*'s Seat.

Thoſe, that their Actions to the Sculptor give,
Buy from their Bodies Fate a ſhort Reprieve.
Their Caution argues that they dread the Grave,
And brings in doubt the Worth they ſtrive to ſave;
Scantily ſever'd from the vulgar Lot,
They are at beſt but leiſurely forgot;
The boaſtful Figures moulder Day by Day,
And half a Cent'ry eats their Pride away.

Mean Artifice! to gild precarious Fame!
A *PRIOR* bears a Statue in his Name.
True Merit does to Heights unlabour'd climb,
And mocks the Ruſt of Age, and Waſte of Time.
Enough to diſtant Years the Man is known,
That ſtood ſo well approv'd by *OXFORD*'s Son:
Enough the Genius lives rever'd, that drew
With ſuch preſumptuous Skill his *QUEEN*, and *YOU*.

Thus did *Apelles'* Hand Death's Razure brave,
And ſhare the Immortality it gave:
Venus and *Ammon* in his Colours ſhown
Tranſmit the Painter's Glory with their own.

Yet

Yet tho' Renown like theirs ſurvives their Urns,
Their Country ſuffers ſtill, the Science mourns.
The more a *PRIOR*'s Excellence we know,
The deeper Anguiſh, and the juſter Woe.
What Pain does the ſevere Reflection coſt,
By what he was, to meaſure what we loſt?
Fondly to gaze his Art's each Relick o'er,
Is only to lament he left no more.

Nor is our Doom ſo mild, that we bemoan
In him a ſingle Art's Decay alone.
A ſingle Ornament a State may ſpare,
Till Time, that makes the Ruin, can repair.
But he, great Maſter of a boundleſs Mind,
Poorly to no one Excellence confin'd,
So far diſdain'd to take in leſs than all,
There's ſcarce a Virtue ſhakes not with his Fall.

Whilſt we admire the Patriot's ſacred Flame,
The Statesman's Talents preſs their ſecond Claim.
This *ANNA* knew, when to a *PRIOR*'s Skill
She gave the great Debates of *Europe*'s Weal.
He went, a Monarch's Pride, a State's Support,
To ſtrike Amazement thro' a foreign Court.

Long

Long had the jealous *Gaul* with *Britain* vy'd,
And, tho' he own'd her Arms, her Arts defy'd,
Till then; then firſt the Rival Land confeſt
The nobler Genius of its *Britiſh* Gueſt:
Its foremoſt Sons lament their raviſh'd Bays,
And *BOURBON* crown'd him with reluctant Praiſe.

Each publick Courſe of Action greatly ran.
Trace thro' leſs pompous Scenes the private Man:
Whoſe Tears refuſe ungrateful to attend
The loſt Companion, and departed Friend?
His Social Wit from Inſolence how clear!
The Friend's Advice how modeſtly ſincere!
Well were his Hours of bleſt Retirement ſought,
To ſhare with *HARLEY* in his private Thought.

But, MADAM, now, methinks, you blame the Song,
That from its firſt Deſign has err'd too long.
His ſeveral Worth let abler Pens revere;
The Poet only be my Subject here:
Here let the Muſes grieve, here ſadly boaſt,
Their Laurels languiſh by his Abſence moſt.

As tender Mothers, who have long with Pride
Survey'd a num'rous Offspring by their Side,
When by hard Stars of one by one bereft,
Can ſtill find Comfort in the next that's left;
Beguile their Loſſes, with their Anguiſh ſtrive,
And ſeem yet happy, let but one ſurvive.
But when relentleſs Fate afflicts too faſt,
And from their Fondneſs tears this darling Laſt,
All their paſt Wounds in this bleed o'er again,
And Hope's ſucceſsleſs Balm but aids their Pain.
Thus when the Muſes, late, at Learning's Shrine,
Number'd with Joy a large Poetic Line;
Spirits well worthy of the Task ſublime,
To bring th' *Auguſtan* Age to preſent Time;
They could afford one godlike Son to Fate,
And glory in Supplies of Souls as great.
No ſooner did a *DRYDEN*'s Genius cloſe,
With kindred Fire but *ADDISON* aroſe:
And tho' with grateful Pain, and generous Smart,
They ſaw this Luſtre to their Bays depart;
E'en whilſt their Tears diſcharge that Writer's Debt,
Their ſecret Tranſport found a *PRIOR* yet.

They cry, the late illuſtrious Author's Shade
Demands this Juſtice of our Grief be paid:
But let no more attend his ſacred Duſt,
A *PRIOR* lives, and calls Deſpair unjuſt.
Have not his Numbers made it half forgot,
Our *SPENSER* ever liv'd, or *COWLEY* wrote?
In him we ſtill elude our threaten'd Doom,
Our Bays ſtill flouriſh, and our Laurels bloom.

But ſee, how Heav'n their proudeſt Boaſt defies!
Their Art muſt periſh, for their *PRIOR* dies.
No skill'd Succeſſor of his Strains they view,
But ſink at once with this ſevere Adieu.

Ye Heroes, mourn your Glory's ſhorten'd Date,
And ſicken in your loſt Recorder's Fate:
With fruitleſs Feats you grace the martial Plain,
And furniſh new Poetic Themes in vain:
No Bard now riſes equal to your Arms;
And e'en bright Beauty wants its future Charms.
No more in Verſe ſhall other *Emma's* tell
What Virtues may a female Fabrick ſwell,

Diſperſe

Diſperſe the Cenſure on the Sex is thrown,
And ſhew they can be *true to One alone*;
That the well judging Maid then only flies,
When Merit's wanting to the Man that ſighs.

What Pen ſurvives to figure, Work divine!
Each new born Wonder of an *HOLLES'* Line?
On that laſt honour'd Name they more than dy'd,
And in the Depth of Anguiſh thus they cry'd.

Oh Patroneſs of Arts! why flows thy Worth
In ſo upbraiding an Abundance forth?
Thy Goodneſs ſhew, in calling back again
Thoſe Beams we only muſt admire with Pain:
In Pity, give thy future Graces o'er;
Ceaſe to deſerve, ſince we can ſing no more.

FINIS.